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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7622nd meeting

Tuesday, 16 February 2016, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ramírez Carreño	(Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of))
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle García
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to advise the Security Council that we have been informed that former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has passed away.

I now invite Council members to rise to observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: The conflict in Yemen continues to kill and maim civilians, causing immeasurable suffering, while destroying livelihoods, homes, communities and essential civilian infrastructure. Much of that is the result of indiscriminate bombing and shelling by the parties. Since March 2015, more than 35,000 casualties, including over 6,000 deaths, have been reported by health facilities across the country. The United Nations has confirmed that at least 2 997 of those killed and 5,659 of those injured are civilians. Conservative estimates suggest that well over 700 children have been killed and over 1,000 more injured. There are reports that as many as 720 children have been forcibly recruited by the parties.

The conflict is exacting a terrible humanitarian toll. Some 2.7 million people have had to flee their homes. At least 7.6 million people are severely food-insecure. Some 2 million acutely malnourished children and pregnant or lactating women need urgent treatment.

Chronic drug shortages, unpaid salaries and conflict-related destruction mean that around 14 million Yemenis do not have sufficient access to health-care services. Since March of last year, nearly 600 health facilities have closed due to damage, shortages of critical supplies or lack of health workers. Nearly 220 of those facilities used to provide treatment for acute malnutrition. In January alone, at least three health facilities were damaged — one hospital in Sa'ada governorate and two facilities in the Nahim district of Sana'a governorate.

More than 1.8 million children have been out of school since mid-March 2015, bringing the total number of children out of school to more than 3.4 million when combined with pre-crisis figures. Over 1,170 schools are now unfit for use due to conflict-related damage, the presence of displaced people or occupation by armed groups.

Water infrastructure serving at least 900,000 people has been either damaged or destroyed by airstrikes, artillery and rockets. For instance last week, the water reservoir serving 40,000 people was completely destroyed, reportedly by an airstrike, in the capital, Sana'a.

United Nations agencies and their non-governmental organization partners are delivering assistance under extraordinarily difficult and dangerous circumstances across the country. For example, on Sunday, a Saudi-led coalition airstrike hit a building 200 metres away from the Diplomatic Transit Facility, which accommodates United Nations and diplomatic personnel.

During January, the humanitarian community provided regular monthly food rations to approximately 2.6 million people and direct water deliveries to over 234,000 people, and supplied fuel to water-pumping stations for more than 3 million people. Health activities reached over 102,000 people. Around 36,000 children were screened for acute malnutrition, and 3,700 malnourished children under 5 years of age were admitted to feeding programmes. Other relief items were provided to over 42,700 people.

Despite those commendable and brave efforts, I am extremely concerned about the increasingly restricted humanitarian space we face to respond the staggering needs of Yemeni men, women and children. In addition to an already dangerous environment, parties to the conflict are contributing to the reduction of humanitarian access. The Houthis and allied

groups remain inconsistent in allowing access and movement of humanitarian goods and personnel. Over the past week, while some United Nations agencies were given approvals, several others were denied for joint inter-agency missions to Ibb, Taizz and Sa'ada. While humanitarian deliveries are ongoing in areas where Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula is present, international humanitarian movement to those areas is extremely challenging and dangerous. That includes locations in the Hadramaut governorate but also in Aden, where severe insecurity prevails.

Humanitarian assistance reached the Taizz city enclave following a high-level mission led by the Humanitarian Coordinator on 22 January. The area faces severe access restrictions by the Houthis and is home to over 200,000 people. Deliveries included food for around 18,000 people, non-food items for approximately 1,250 families and medical supplies, including 170 oxygen cylinders and 30,000 units of dialysis sessions. Over the weekend, additional assistance reached the enclave, including food for a further 18,000 people, cancer treatment drugs, surgical items, intravenous fluids and anesthetic supplies and HIV antiretroviral treatments. Those are positive developments, and I note Houthi commitments on access to Taizz city made during talks in Biel and reaffirmed to the Special Envoy in his last visit to Yemen. Humanitarian deliveries into the enclave often require long and protracted negotiations with parties on the ground, however. Efforts are ongoing to establish a monitoring mechanism that will enable predictable access, as opposed to ad hoc/one-time deliveries.

Access to northern governorates, where needs are among the most severe in the country, also continue to be challenging due to relentless conflict, including airstrikes — in particular to communities along the border with Saudi Arabia, where conflict is intense. Humanitarian agencies and partners are committed to implementing an operation to deliver food, health and sanitation supplies to some 350,000 people in Sa'ada governorate. This past month, more than 276,000 people were provided food in the governorate.

Recent communication received from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia regarding the safety of humanitarian workers in Houthi-controlled areas has impacted the humanitarian community's planning, causing delays to important missions over the past two weeks. That follows the denial of entry to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 17 January of the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator. On 11 February, one of charter vessels of the World Food Programme — the *MV Mainport Cedar* — which was carrying humanitarian supplies for United Nations offices in Aden and travelling from Djibouti with a scheduled and approved stop in the Yemen port of Hodeidah, was diverted by coalition forces to the Saudi Arabian port of Jizan.

The parties to the conflict have a duty of care in the conduct of military operations to protect all civilian persons and objects — including humanitarian and health-care workers and facilities — against attack. The parties should also refrain from using explosive weapons in populated areas, which cause unacceptable harm by killing large numbers of civilians, destroying homes, severely hindering critical services over the immediate and longer term and leaving behind explosive remnants of war. I remind all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law to facilitate humanitarian access to all areas of Yemen. United Nations agencies and their partners will continue to deliver impartial and neutral assistance across Yemen according to need, using the established de-confliction mechanism in Riyadh with the coalition for humanitarian staff and supply movements, including those to and from subnational offices in Sa'ada, Hodeidah, Ibb and Aden.

Humanitarian assistance must be complemented by efforts to revive the economy and the flow of much-needed commercial goods, which has been severely impeded by the ongoing conflict. Given the heavy dependence of Yemen on imported food and fuel, it will be critical to ensure that inspections in line with resolution 2216 (2015) do not adversely impact the flow of commercial shipping into Yemen of basic items that Yemeni civilians rely on to survive.

I am pleased to report that the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) has now been formally launched. The mechanism must now contribute to continued improvements in the levels of commercial imports into Yemeni ports outside the control of the Government of Yemen and that are not channelled through a United Nations agency or recognized international humanitarian organization. The Secretary-General has formally requested the Government of Yemen and the Saudi-led coalition to appoint representatives to sit on the steering committee by 22 February. All States Members of the United Nations have been informed. The mechanism will operate for an initial six months out of Djibouti, and

will move to Aden and/or Sana'a when the security situation permits. UNVIM monitors will also be based in Dubai, Jeddah and Salalah to work with the relevant authorities.

In two days' time, the 2016 Yemen humanitarian response plan will be launched in Geneva. The plan calls for $1.8 billion to address the most critical and prioritized needs across all governorates in the country, including food assistance for nearly 9 million people, water and sanitation support for 7.4 million, urgent health support for 10.6 million persons and emergency interventions to mitigate growing and severe malnutrition rates. I cannot overstate the importance of donor support for that endeavour, nor the urgency we face in responding to humanitarian needs, which only deepen as the conflict intensifies.

Nearly one year into the conflict, it is now more important than ever that we address the human catastrophe unfolding in Yemen. I again underscore the urgent need for the Council, and the international community more broadly, to impress upon the parties to the conflict their obligations to facilitate unconditional and sustained access to all parts of Yemen, and to take greater measures to protect civilians. I also reiterate the urgent request that the Council press the parties to resume peace talks and agree to a ceasefire.

The Yemeni people are suffering. They need the Council to act now.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.